

2

On Education and Society

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Educational transformations are always the result and the symptom of the social transformations in terms of which they are to be explained. For a people to feel at any given moment the need to change its educational system, it is necessary that new ideas and needs have emerged for which the old system is no longer adequate. But these needs and ideas do not arise spontaneously; if they suddenly come to the forefront of human consciousness after having been ignored for centuries, it is necessarily the case that in the intervening period there has been a change and that it is this change of which they are an expression. Thus, in order to understand the educational achievement of the sixteenth century, we need as a preliminary to know in a general way what constituted the great social movement that historians call the Renaissance and of which a new educational theory was but one manifestation.

The essence of the Renaissance has often been identified with a return to the spirit of classical times; and indeed this is precisely the meaning of the word normally used to designate this period of European history. The sixteenth century is supposed to have been a period when man, abandoning the gloomy ideals of the Middle Ages, reverted to the gayer and more self-confident view of life which prevailed in the ancient pagan world. As to the cause of this change of direction, it allegedly consisted in the rediscovery of classical literature, the principal masterpieces of which were rescued during this period from the oblivion in which they had languished for centuries. On this view it was the discovery of the great works of classical literature that brought about this new change of outlook in the western European mind. But to speak of the Renaissance in this way is only to point in the most superficial way to its façade. If it were indeed true that the sixteenth century simply took up the classical tradition at the point it had reached when the Dark Ages arrived and temporarily blotted it out, the Renaissance would emerge as a movement of moral and intellectual reaction that would be hard to account for. We would have to assume that humanity had strayed from its natural path for fifteen centuries, since it had to retrace its steps back over a period of such length in order to embark upon a whole new stage in its career. Certainly progress does not proceed in a straight line; it makes turnings and detours; advances are followed by recessions but that such an aberration should be prolonged over a period of fifteen hundred years is historically incredible. It is true that this view of the Renaissance accords with the way in which the eighteenth-century-writers spoke of it. But just because they felt a kind of admiration for the simple life of primitive societies, are we to say that then social philosophy was an attempt to restore prehistoric civilization? Because the men of the Revolution thought that they were imitating the actions of the ancient Romans, are we to view the society that resulted from the Revolution as an imitation of the ancient city? People involved in action are the least well placed to see the causes that underlie their actions, and the way in which they represent to themselves the social movement of which they are a part should always be regarded as suspect and should by no means be thought of as having any special claim to credibility.

Besides, it is simply not true that classical literature was unknown during the centuries we have just been considering, that it was only discovered towards the beginning of the sixteenth century, and

that it was this revelation that suddenly expanded the intellectual horizons of Europe. The fact is that there was not a single period during the whole of the Middle Ages when these literary masterpieces were not known; in every generation we find a few people sufficiently intelligent and sensitive to be able to appreciate their worth. Abélard, the hero of dialectic, was at the same time a literary scholar; Virgil, Seneca, Cicero, and Ovid were just as familiar to him as were Boethius and Augustine. During the twelfth century there was a famous school at Chartres which, inspired by its founder, Bernard de Chartres, offered a classical education similar to what would later be offered by the Jesuits. One could multiply examples of this type. It is true that these attempts to introduce classical literature into education remained isolated cases; they never succeeded in capturing the imagination of the Scholastics, who cast them back into obscurity. But they are nonetheless real, and they are sufficient to prove that if classical literature was not appreciated in the Middle Ages, if it played no part in education, this was not because people did not know of its existence. In short, the Middle Ages knew about all the main aspects of classical civilization, but it only retained what it regarded as important, what answered to its own needs. Its entire attention was caught by logic, and this eclipsed everything else. Thus, if everything changed in the sixteenth century, if suddenly Greek and Roman art and literature were recognized as being of incomparable educational value, this clearly must have been because at that moment in history, as a consequence of a change that had taken place in the public mind, logic lost its former prestige—while by contrast an urgent need was felt for the first time for a kind of culture that would be more refined, more elegant or literary. People did not acquire this taste because they had just discovered classical antiquity; rather, they demanded from the antiquity they already knew the means of satisfying the new taste they had just acquired. What we must seek, therefore, is an account of this change of direction in the intellectual and moral outlook of the European peoples, if we wish to understand the nature of the Renaissance insofar as it affected educational thought no less than scientific and literary thought. A people only modifies its mental outlook to such an enormous extent when very fundamental features of social life have themselves been modified. We can therefore be certain in advance that the Renaissance derives, not, I repeat, from the fortuitous fact that certain classical works were exhumed at this time, but rather from profound changes in the organization of European societies. I cannot, of course, attempt here to paint a complete and detailed picture of these transformations, but I should like at least to point out the most important of them so as to be able to relate the educational movement we shall be exploring to its social roots.

In the first place, there was a group of interrelated changes in the economic sphere. People had finally got away from the paltry life-style of the Middle Ages, when the general insecurity of relations paralyzed the spirit of enterprise, when the limited number of markets stifled great ambition, when only the extreme simplicity of their tastes and needs enabled men to live in harmony with their environment. Gradually order had been established; better government and more efficient administration had rallied people's confidence. Towns had proliferated and become more populous. Most important of all, the discovery of America and the trade route via the Indies had galvanized economic activity by opening up new worlds in which it could operate. Consequently, the general welfare had been increased; vast fortunes had been amassed; and the acquisition of wealth stimulated and developed a taste for the easy, elegant life of luxury....

However, if this transformation had been limited to the world of the aristocracy, it probably would not have had such extensive social consequences. But one of the effects of accrued wealth was to produce at the same time a narrowing of the gaps between social classes. Up till then the bourgeoisie had not even dared raise its eyes to look at the aristocracy across what it felt to be a great fixed gulf. And it found it natural to lead quite a different existence. But now that the bourgeoisie had become richer and consequently more powerful, it also became more ambitious and sought to narrow the gap. Its expectations had increased with its resources, making the life it had led up till then appear intolerable. It was no longer afraid to cast its gaze upwards and it wanted as well to live the life of the nobles, to

imitate their style, to reach the peaks in every field, to be in the same way as the bourgeoisie in the Middle Ages; they were not in obscurity; they were a noble lady and an embroidered robe in the old days. Ladies did not wear leather rush to marry plebeian. It is easy to guess accompanied to produce a good unsuited to the and possessing

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Whereas in the homogeneous, characters. England and his success any of the other. However appeared high of thought and the systems of law since the great could not organize the right to deviate it; that is to say, and not as abstract that we find the natural result of within the home for it. Scholastic questions and. However, between were always religious voices were scarce and that shook that new forces

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imitate their style, their manners, their luxury. As one writer puts it: "Pride was reaching ever higher peaks in every section of the community. The bourgeoisie in the towns have started wanting to dress in the same way as the aristocracy...and the people from the villages in the same way as the bourgeoisie in the towns." According to another author, the bourgeois ladies grew bored with their life of obscurity; they now wanted to copy the great ladies. "One can scarcely distinguish any longer between a noble lady and a plebeian...one sees women who are worse than plebeian dressing in flowing robes embroidered in gold and silver...their fingers are loaded with emeralds and other precious stones...in the old days the practice of kissing a lady's hand in greeting was restricted to aristocrats, and noble ladies did not offer their hand to the first comer, let alone to anyone at all. Today men smelling of leather rush to kiss the hand of a woman whose escutcheon is exclusively aristocratic. Patrician ladies marry plebeian men, plebeian women marry patrician men; thus we are breeding hybrid creatures." It is easy to guess that so considerable a change in the way life was understood would inevitably be accompanied by a change in the way education was understood, and that instruction designed to produce a good bachelor of arts, versed in all the secrets of syllogism and argument, would be quite unsuited to the enterprise of producing an elegant and fluent nobleman able to hold his own in a salon and possessing all the social graces.

However, in addition to this transformation, there was another one, no less important, which took place in the world of ideas.

By the sixteenth century, the great nation states of Europe had been in large measure established. Whereas in the Middle Ages there had been but one Europe, one Christendom, which was united and homogeneous, there now existed great individual collectivities with their own intellectual and moral characters. England found its identity and its unity with the Tudors, Spain with Ferdinand of Castile and his successors. Germany with the Hapsburgs (albeit more vaguely), and France did so before any of the others under the Capetians. The old unity of Christendom had thus been definitively shattered. However much people continued to profess respect for the fundamental doctrines, which still appeared highly abstract, each of the groups which had thus been formed had its own special mode of thought and feeling, its own national temperament whose particular emphasis tended to affect the systems of belief that had been accepted until that time by the vast majority of the faithful. And since the great moral figures that had arisen could only develop their individual natures, since they could not organize their thoughts and beliefs according to their own lights unless they were granted the right to deviate from accepted beliefs, they claimed this right and in claiming it they proclaimed it; that is to say they claimed the rights of schism and of free inquiry—albeit only to a limited extent, and not as absolute rights, since such a thing would have been inconceivable at the time. It is here that we find the root cause of the Reformation, that other aspect of the Renaissance that was the natural result of the movement towards individualization and differentiation taking place at that time within the homogeneous mass of Europe. In one sense, of course, Scholasticism had paved the way for it. Scholasticism had taught reason to be more self-confident by confronting it with monumental questions and equipping it with a rigorous logical training so that it might make fresh conquests. However, between the audacities of Scholasticism, especially at the end of the fifteenth century, which were always relatively moderate—between the more or less bold claims made by a few thinkers whose voices were scarcely heard outside the schools, and the sudden explosion that was the Reformation and that shook the whole of Europe, there is clearly a radical break, which bears witness to the fact that new forces had come into play.

Here we have a new causal factor, which was to bring about a change in the theory and practice of education. The Christian faith had played too large a part in medieval education for the educational system not to be affected by the upheavals that faith was undergoing. Moreover, there were other ways in which the economic factor exercised a parallel influence. It is clear, in fact, that the aesthetic ideal of the Middle Ages was quite unsuited for pupils who had acquired a taste for luxury and the life of

leisure. And since this aesthetic ideal was the ideal of Christianity, Christianity itself was affected by the same phenomenon. For it was not possible that the aversion felt henceforth for the old view of life should not be extended to the whole system of beliefs upon which that view of life was grounded. If, as we have argued, Christianity was accepted so readily by the barbarians, this was precisely because of its starkness, its indifference towards the products of civilization, its disdain for the joys of existence. But the same reasons that accounted for its triumph then were now to diminish its authority over people's minds. Societies that had learned to savor the joy of living could no longer put up with a doctrine that rendered sacrifice, self-denial, abstinence, and suffering in general the supreme objects of desire.

Individuals, sensing that this system ran counter to their deepest feelings and opposed the satisfaction of needs they regarded as quite natural, could only be disposed to cast doubt upon it, or at least to cast doubt upon the way it had been interpreted up to that time; for it is impossible to accept uncritically, unreservedly, and without sufficient reason a doctrine that in certain respects seems to go against nature. Without renouncing it completely, people came to feel the need to revise it, to interpret it afresh, in such a way that it would harmonize with the aspirations of the age. Now, any such revision and reinterpretation presuppose the right to revise, to inspect, and to interpret, in some sense the right to examine, which, however one looks at it, implies a diminution of faith....

Now, it is clear that there is nothing in Scholasticism that could have satisfied these new tastes: on the contrary, it was bound to be hostile to them. Since it attached no importance to form, it did not hesitate to twist language savagely in order to satisfy all the needs of thought, without regard to considerations of purity or harmony. As a result of the very great place it accorded to debate, it developed a taste not for ideas that were delicate, subtle, measured, but rather for opinions that were dogmatic and clear-cut and whose features stood out in such a way that conflicting opinions could be clearly contrasted. Moreover, the violent arguments that were born of these contrasts could only encourage a coarseness in manners comparable to what had been upheld for so long by the noble knights in their tournaments and similar practices. The student of the Middle Ages was primarily concerned with crushing his opponent beneath the weight of his arguments and did not care in the least whether his presentation was attractive. His unkempt appearance and his rustic deportment and manners were expressions of this same state of mind.

Here we have the explanation of why the men of the new generation were quite literally horrified by Scholasticism and its methods. The extreme virulence of their polemics seems at first sight to be out of place in a purely educational quarrel. But the fact is that the issue was really more wide-ranging. The sixteenth century did not accuse Scholasticism simply of having engaged in certain debatable or regrettable academic practices but rather of having constituted a school of barbarousness and coarseness. Hence the frequency with which the words *barbarus*, *stoliditas*, *rusticitas* recur in the writings of Erasmus. To these refined minds a Scholastic is quite literally a barbarian (remember the title of Erasmus's book *Antibarbaros*), who speaks a language scarcely human, crude-sounding, formally inelegant; who delights only in arguments, in deafening yells, in verbal and other battles; who is ignorant, in sum, of all the benefits of civilization, of everything that contributes to the charm of life. We can readily conceive of the feeling such an educational system would be capable of arousing in men whose aim was to render humanity more tender, more elegant, more cultivated.

The only way to succeed in ridding the human intellect of its coarseness, to polish and refine it, was to introduce it to and make it intimate with an elegant and refined civilization, so that it might become imbued with its spirit. Now, the only civilization that could satisfy this condition at that time was that of the classical peoples as it had been expressed and preserved in the works of their great writers, poets, and orators. It was thus quite natural that these should be seen as providing the school-teachers needed by the young. "What then," says Erasmus, "what then could have guided these coarse men of the Stone Age towards a more human life, towards being more gentle of character and more civilized in morals? Was it not literature? It is literature that molds the mind, that mollifies passions,

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With this in the extant elements time to the most sought to imitating discovered, a taste for literature became objects available of satisfaction was not because rather, its virtue contrast, they were being of incompleteness and could only greater frequency fact that since, of their ingenuity attaches importance

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Here too we theory. It is the is always center or at least from elegance and an important that world, which is neglected and an improvement

When such it necessary to everyone, Erasmus ask," he says, "be able to give reply by quotation should be as good as a child, we can wish that the be prevented from

that checks the untamed outbursts of natural temperament." For this purpose there existed no other established and developed literatures apart from those of Rome and Greece.

With this in view, the moral milieu in which the child was to be molded had to be made up of all the extant elements of these literatures. Hence the enormous attention accorded by the public at this time to the masterpieces of Greco-Roman civilization. If people esteemed and admired them, if they sought to imitate them, this is not because they were exhumed at this moment in history and, by being discovered, suddenly inculcated in people a taste for literature. Quite the reverse: it was because a taste for literature, a taste for a new kind of civilization, had just been acquired that they suddenly became objects of enthusiastic veneration; for they appeared, and quite rightly so, as the only means available of satisfying this new need. If this vast body of literature had hitherto been neglected, this was not because nothing was known of it (we have already seen that the major works were known); rather, its virtues were not appreciated because they did not meet any contemporary need. If, by contrast, they were then regarded in the eyes of public opinion, or at least of a certain section of it, as being of incomparable value, this was because a new attitude of mind was in the process of developing and could only be fully realized in the school of the classics. And one may even wonder whether the greater frequency of the finds and exhumations that occurred at this period was not a result of the fact that since, henceforth, the value of these discoveries was fully appreciated people devoted more of their ingenuity to making them. To find, one must seek, and one only seeks in earnest when one attaches importance to what one hopes to find.

Thus the educational ideas of the humanists were not the result of simple accidents. They derived, rather, from a fact whose influence on the moral history of our country it is difficult to exaggerate; I refer to the establishment of polite society. If France did indeed become from the sixteenth century onwards a center of literary life and intellectual activity, this was because, at this same period, there had developed among us a select society, a society of intellectually cultivated people to whom our writers addressed themselves. It was the ideas and the tastes of this society that they communicated; it was for this society that they wrote and for it that they thought. It was here in this particular environment that the driving force of our civilization from the sixteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth century arose. And the object of education as Erasmus conceived of it was to prepare man for this special and restricted society.

Here too we can see the essential character and at the same time the radical flaw of this educational theory. It is the fact that it is essentially aristocratic in nature. The kind of society that it seeks to fashion is always centered around a court, and its members are always drawn from the ranks of the aristocracy or at least from the leisured classes. And it was indeed here and here alone that that fine flowering of elegance and culture could take place, the nurturing and development of which were regarded as more important than anything else. Neither Erasmus nor Vivès had any awareness that beyond this small world, which for all its brilliance was very limited, there were vast masses who should not have been neglected and for whom education could have brought about higher intellectual and moral standards and an improved material condition.

When such a thought did occur to them it disappeared again very quickly without their thinking it necessary to examine it at length. Since he realizes that this expensive education is not suitable for everyone, Erasmus wonders what the poor will do; his answer to this objection is utterly simple. "You ask," he says, "what the poor will be able to do. How will those who can scarcely feed their children be able to give them over a sustained period of time the right kind of education? To this I can only reply by quoting the words of the comic writer: 'You can't ask that what we are capable of achieving should be as great as what we would like to achieve.' We are expounding the best way of bringing up a child, we cannot produce the means of realizing this ideal." He restricts himself to expressing the wish that the rich will come to the help of those who are well-endowed intellectually but who would be prevented by poverty from developing their aptitudes. But he seems not to realize that even if this

education were made available to everybody the difficulty would not be resolved, for this generalized education would not meet the needs of the majority. Indeed, for the majority the supreme need is survival, and what is needed in order to survive is not the art of subtle speech, it is the art of sound thinking, so that one knows how to act. In order to struggle effectively in the world of persons and the world of things more substantial weapons are needed than those glittering decorations with which the humanist educationalists were concerned to adorn the mind to the exclusion of anything else.

Think now how much Scholasticism, for all its abstractness, was imbued with a more practical, more realistic, and more social spirit. The fact is that dialectic answered real needs. Intellectual conflict, competition between ideas, constitutes a genuinely important part of life. Moreover, the strength and virility of thought which were acquired as a result of such arduous mental gymnastics could be used in the service of socially useful ends. Thus we must beware of thinking that the medieval schools served only to produce dreamers, seekers after quintessences, and useless pettifogging quibblers. The truth is quite the opposite. It was there that the statesmen, the ecclesiastical dignitaries, and the administrators of the day were brought up. This training, which has been so denigrated, created men of action. It was the education recommended by Erasmus that forms a totally inadequate preparation for life. In it, rhetoric supplants dialectic. Now, if rhetoric had good reason for featuring in the education of the classical world, where the practice of eloquence constituted not only a career but the most important career, this was by no means the case in the sixteenth century, when it played only a very small part in the serious business of life. A theory of education that made rhetoric the principal academic discipline could thus only develop qualities related to the luxuries of existence and not at all to its necessities....

In order to know what became of the educational theories of the Renaissance when they were translated into practice, it would thus seem that we have only to investigate how the University understood them and applied them. But what makes such a procedure impossible, what makes the whole question more complicated, is the great change that took place at this very moment in our academic organization. Up till that time the University had a complete monopoly on and sole responsibility for education, and consequently the future of any educational reforms was dependent upon the University and upon the University alone. However, towards the middle of the sixteenth century, over and against the University corporation there was established a new teaching corporation, which was to break the University's monopoly and which was even to achieve with quite remarkable rapidity a kind of hegemony in academic life. This was the corporation of the Jesuits.

The Jesuit order arose from the need felt by the Catholic Church to check the increasingly threatening progress of Protestantism. With extraordinary speed the doctrines of Luther and Calvin had won over England, almost the whole of Germany, Switzerland, the Low Countries, Sweden, and a considerable part of France. In spite of all the rigorous measures taken, the Church felt itself impotent and began to fear that its dominion in the world would collapse completely. It was then that Ignatius Loyola had the idea of raising a wholly new kind of religious militia the better to combat and, if possible to crush, heresy. He realized that the days were over when people's souls could be governed from the depths of a cloister. Now that people, carried by their own momentum, were tending to elude the Church, it was essential that the Church move closer to them so as to be able to influence them. Now that particular personalities were beginning to stand out from the homogeneous moral and intellectual mass that had been the rule in preceding centuries, it was essential for the Church to be close to individuals, to accommodate its influence over them to intellectual and temperamental diversities. In short, the vast monastic masses familiar to the Middle Ages, which, stationary at their post, had restricted themselves to repulsing such attacks as occurred, without, however, knowing how to take the offensive themselves, had to be replaced. An army of light troops would be established that would be in constant contact with the enemy and consequently well-informed about all his movements, but at the same time sufficiently alert and mobile to be able to go at the slightest signal wherever there

was danger, and yet so of people and circumstances same goal and cooperation

What was distinctive the Middle Ages had to a religious order in all subject to one and thought and action had or religious. The Jesuits all the characteristics hears confessions, he life of the world. For but in action, in the Loyola used to say, "to of piety, they impose to preserve and to for should not assault you longer be able to act

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was danger, and yet sufficiently flexible to be able to vary its tactics in accordance with the diversity of people and circumstances; its troops would do all this while always and everywhere pursuing the same goal and cooperating in the same grand design. This army was the Company of Jesus.

What was distinctive about it was that it was able to contain within itself two characteristics, which the Middle Ages had adjudged irreconcilable and contradictory. On the one hand, the Jesuits belong to a religious order in the same way as the Dominicans or the Franciscans; they have a head, they are all subject to one and the same rule, to a communal discipline; indeed passive obedience and unity of thought and action have never been carried to such an extreme degree in any militia whether secular or religious. The Jesuit is thus a regular priest. But, on the other hand, he simultaneously possesses all the characteristics of the secular priest; he wears his habit; he fulfills his functions, he preaches, he hears confessions, he catechizes; he does not live in the shadow of a monastery, he rather mingles in the life of the world. For him duty consists not in the mortification of the flesh, in fasting, in abstinence, but in action, in the realization of the goal of the Society. "Let us leave the religious orders," Ignatius Loyola used to say, "to outdo us in fasts, in watches, in the austerity of the regime and habit that, out of piety, they impose upon themselves." "I believe that it is more valuable, for the glory of Our Lord, to preserve and to fortify the stomach and other natural faculties rather than enfeebling them... you should not assault your own physical nature, because if you exhaust it your intellectual nature will no longer be able to act with the same energy."

Not only must the Jesuit mingle with the world, he must also open himself up to the ideas that are dominant within it. The better to guide his age he must speak its language, he must assimilate its sports. Ignatius Loyola sensed that a profound change had taken place in manners and that there was no going back on this: that a taste for well-being, for a less harsh, easier sunnier existence had been acquired that could not conceivably be stifled or fobbed off; that man had developed a greater degree of pity for his own sufferings and for those of his fellowmen, that there was more sparing of pain, and consequently that the old ideal of absolute renunciation was finished. To prevent the faithful from drifting away from religion, the Jesuits devoted their ingenuity to divesting religion of its former austerity: they made it pleasant and devised all kinds of accommodating arrangements to make it easy to observe. It is true that in order to remain faithful to the mission they had assigned themselves, to avoid seeming to encourage the innovators against whom they were struggling by their own example, they had at the same time to stick to the letter of immutable dogma. It is well known how they extricated themselves from this difficulty and were able to reconcile these conflicting demands thanks to their casuistry, whose excessive flexibility and over ingenious refinements have frequently been pointed out. While maintaining in their sacred form the traditional prescriptions of Roman Catholicism, they were still able to place these within the scope not only of human weakness in general—there is no religion that has ever managed to escape this necessity—but of the elegant frivolousness of the leisured classes of the sixteenth century in particular; it was these leisured classes that it was so important to keep free from heresy and to preserve in the faith. And this is how, while they became essentially men of the past, defenders of the Catholic tradition, the Jesuits were able to exhibit towards the idea, the tastes, and even the defects of the time an attitude of indulgence for which they have often, and not without reason, been reproached. They thus had a dual identity as conservatives, even as reactionaries, on the one hand, and as liberals on the other; a complex policy the nature of which we needed to show here, for we shall encounter it again in the foundations of their educational theory.

But they very quickly came to realize that in order to achieve their end it was not enough to preach, to hear confession, to catechize: the really important instrument in the struggle for mastery of the human soul was the education of the young. Thus they resolved to seize hold of it. One fact in particular made them acutely aware of the urgent need for this; one would have had to be blind to all the evidence not to see that the new methods taking root in the schools could only have the effect of opening up the road to heresy. Indeed, the greatest minds of the time, the most illustrious of the

humanists, had openly been converted to the new religion; this was the case with Dolet, with Ramus, with Mathurin Cordier, with the majority of teachers in the College de France, recently founded by Francois I. Thus humanism by its very nature constituted a threat to the faith. And indeed it is clear that an inordinate taste for paganism was bound to cause people's minds to dwell in a moral environment with absolutely nothing Christian about it. Accordingly, if the evil was to be attacked at its sources it would be necessary instead of abandoning the humanist movement to its own devices, to gain control of it and to direct it.

The aim of the Jesuits thus had nothing to do with getting the pupil acquainted with and able to understand classical civilizations; it was exclusively concerned with teaching them to speak and write in Greek and Latin. This explains the importance attributed to written assignments and the nature of these assignments. This is why in the grammar classes prose composition prevailed and was far more important than translation from Latin, which was scarcely practiced at all. This is why stylistic exercises were so numerous and so varied. This attitude even influenced the way the expositions were carried out. Father Jouveny has left us model expositions of Latin authors; one has only to read them to see that their main aim is to get the pupils to appreciate the author's Latin and his literary style, and to encourage them to imitate these same qualities.

Far from seeking to get their pupils to think again the thoughts of antiquity, far from wishing to steep them in the spirit of classical times, the Jesuits had precisely the opposite aim. Indeed, this was because they could see no other way of extricating themselves from the contradictory situation in which they had quite deliberately placed themselves. Because the fashion was for humanism, because classical letters were the object of a veritable cult, the Jesuits, always sensitive to the spirit of their age, professed, as we have just seen, a form of humanism—even quite an uncompromising one, since Greek and Latin alone were permitted entry into their colleges. But from another point of view, as we have said, they realized full well that humanism constituted a threat, that there was a real danger in wishing to fashion Christian souls in the school of paganism. How could these two contradictory needs be reconciled? How could the faith be defended and safeguarded as was required by the self-imposed mission of the Jesuits, while they simultaneously made themselves the apologists and exegetes of pagan literature?

There was only one way of resolving this antinomy: this was, in the very words used by Father Jouveny, to expound the classical authors in such a way "that they became, although pagan and profane, the eulogists of the faith." To make paganism serve the glorification and the propagation of the Christian ethic was a daring undertaking and, it would appear, remarkably difficult; and yet, the Jesuits had enough confidence in their ability to attempt it and to succeed in it. But in order to do this they had deliberately to denature the ancient world; they had to show the authors of antiquity, the men they were and the men they portray for us, in such a way as to leave in the shadows everything that was genuinely pagan about them, everything that makes them men of a particular city at a particular time, in order to highlight only those respects in which they are simply men, men as they are at all times and in all places. All the legends, all the traditions, all the religious ideas of Rome and Greece were interpreted in this spirit so as to give them a meaning any good Christian could accept.

Thus the Greco-Roman environment in which they made their pupils live was emptied of everything specifically Greek or Roman, so that it became a kind of unreal, idealized environment peopled by personalities who had no doubt historically existed but who were presented in such a way that they had, so to speak, nothing historical about them. They were now simply figures betokening certain virtues and vices and all the great passions of humanity. Achilles is courage; Ulysses is wily prudence; Numa is the archetype of the pious king; Caesar, the man of ambition; Augustus, the powerful monarch and lover of learning; etc. Such general and unspecific types could easily be used to exemplify the precepts of Christian morality.

Such disinheriting of antiquity was made easier for the Jesuits by the fact that, at least for a long

time, all teaching of history was unknown. A writer's work of the author, his manner of historical personality must be selected passages and but selected passages and sparse and disjointed fragments of these pieces could sort of fair copy of excellence.

We can now understand many other educators, I value greater than that time when the historic specific as the present-unstable forms, which more malleable and pliable is thus easier to bend and embellish without real to imitate. The present not lend itself to this with its ugliness, its manner serve our educational an instrument for Christian of their own age in their desire to attain taking refuge in antiquity.

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Their entire discipline.

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time, all teaching of history was almost completely absent from their colleges. Even literary history was unknown. A writer's works were expounded without anyone's bothering to notice the physiognomy of the author, his manner, the way he related it to his age, to his environment, to his predecessors. His historical personality mattered so little that it was normal to study not an author, not even a work, but selected passages and extracts. How was it possible to form a picture of a specific man out of such sparse and disjointed fragments, among which his individuality was dispersed and dissolved? Each of these pieces could scarcely appear to be anything other than an isolated model of literary style, a sort of fair copy of exceptional authoritativeness.

We can now understand better how it came about that the Jesuits, and perhaps to a lesser extent so many other educators, tended to attribute to the past and especially to the distant past an educational value greater than that which they attributed to the present. This was because the past, at least at a time when the historical sciences have not advanced sufficiently to render it almost as precise and specific as the present—the past, because we see it from afar, naturally appears to us in vague, fluid, unstable forms, which are consequently all the easier to mold according to our will. It constitutes a more malleable and plastic substance that we can transform and present according to our fancy. It is thus easier to bend it for educational purposes. These people, these things from former times, we embellish without realizing we are deceiving ourselves in order to turn them into models for youth to imitate. The present, because it is before our very eyes, forces itself upon our attention and does not lend itself to this kind of reworking; it is virtually impossible for us to see it other than as it is with its ugliness, its mediocrity, its vices, and its failings; and this is why it seems to us ill-adapted to serve our educational ends. It was in this way that antiquity in the hands of the Jesuits could become an instrument for Christian education, whereas they would not have been able to utilize literature of their own age in the same way, imbued as it was with the spirit of rebellion against the church. In their desire to attain their goal, they had a powerful vested interest in fleeing from the moderns and taking refuge in antiquity....

But so far we have only studied the Jesuits' teaching. We must now consider their disciplinary structures. It is perhaps in this area that they showed the most art and originality and it is their superiority in this respect that best explains their success.

Their entire discipline was founded upon two principles.

The first was that there can be no good education without contact at once continuous and personal between the pupil and the educator—and this principle served a dual purpose. First, it ensured that the pupil was never left to his own devices. To be properly molded he had to be subjected to pressure that never let up or flagged; for the spirit of evil is constantly watchful. This is why the Jesuits' pupil was never alone. "A supervisor would follow him everywhere, to church, to class, to the refectory, to his recreation; in the living quarters and sleeping quarters he was always there examining everything." But this supervision was not intended only to prevent misconduct. It was also to enable the Jesuit to study at his ease "character and habits so that he might manage to discover the most suitable method of directing each individual child." In other words, this direct and constant intercourse was supposed not only to render the educational process more sustained in its effect but also to make it more personal and better suited to the personality of each pupil. Father Jouvency never stops recommending that a teacher not limit himself to exerting a general and impersonal influence on the anonymous crowd of pupils but rather graduate his influence and vary it according to age, intelligence, and situation. If he is conversing with a child in private, "let him examine the child's character so that he can mold what he says in accordance with it and, as they say, 'hook' his interlocutor with the appropriate bait." And the better to get the pupils to open their minds to him, he will need to make them open their hearts by endearing himself. Indeed there can be no doubt that in the course of the relationships thus cemented between teachers and pupils, bonds of friendship were frequently formed that survived school life. Thus Descartes remained very sincerely attached to his former teachers at La Flèche.

One can readily imagine how effective this system of continuous immersion must have been. The child's moral environment followed him wherever he went; all around him he heard the same ideas and the same sentiments being expressed with the same authority. He could never lose sight of them. He knew of no others. And in addition to the fact that this influence never ceased to make itself felt, it was also all the more powerful because it knew how best to adapt to the diversity of individual personalities, because it was most familiar with the openings through which it could slip and insinuate itself in the pupil's heart. By comparison with the style of discipline that had been practiced in the Middle Ages this represented a major revolution. The medieval teacher addressed himself to large and impersonal audiences, among which each individual, that is to say each student, was lost, drowned, and consequently abandoned to his own devices. Now, education is essentially an individual matter, and as long as the medieval teacher was dealing with vast masses he could obtain only very crude results. Hence the rowdy indiscipline of the students of the Middle Ages, which the establishment of the fully residential colleges was an attempt—never fully successful—to counter. For the colleges did not have at their disposal a staff of teachers and supervisors sufficiently numerous or perhaps sufficiently committed to the task of supervision to be able to exercise the necessary control and influence over each individual.

But in order to train pupils in intensive formal work, which was moreover pretty lacking in substance, it was not enough to surround them, to envelop them at close quarters with solicitude and vigilance; it was not enough to be constantly concerned to contain and sustain them; it was also necessary to stimulate them. The goad which the Jesuits employed consisted exclusively of competition. Not only were they the first to organize the competitive system in the colleges, they also developed it to a greater intensity than it has ever subsequently known.

Although today in our classrooms this system still has considerable importance, nevertheless it no longer functions without interruption. It is fair to say that with the Jesuits it was never suspended for a single moment. The entire class was organized to promote this end. The pupils were divided into two camps, the Romans on the one hand and the Carthaginians on the other, who lived, so to speak, on the brink of war, each striving to outstrip the other. Each camp had its own dignitaries. At the head of the camp there was an emperor, also known as dictator or consul, then came a praetor, a tribune, and some senators. These honors, which were naturally coveted and contested, were distributed as the outcome of a competition, which was held monthly. From another point of view, each camp was divided into groups consisting of ten pupils each ("decuries"), commanded by a captain (called the "decurion") who was selected from among the worthies we have just mentioned. These groups were not recruited at random. There was a hierarchy among them: the first groups were composed of the best pupils, the last groups of the weakest and least industrious of the scholars. Thus just as the camp as a whole was in competition with the opposite camp, so in each camp each group had its own immediate rival in the other camp at the equivalent level. Finally, individuals themselves were matched and each soldier in a group had his opposite number in the opposing group. Thus academic work involved a kind of perpetual hand-to-hand combat. Camp challenged camp; group struggled with group; pupils supervised one another, corrected one another, and took one another to task. On some occasions the teacher was not supposed to be afraid of pitting together two pupils of unequal ability. For example, an able pupil would have his work corrected by a less able pupil, says Father Jouveney, "so that those who have made mistakes may be the more ashamed and the more mortified by them." It was even possible for any pupil to do battle with a pupil from a higher group and, if victorious, to take his place.

It is interesting to note that these various ennoblements carried with them not only honorific titles but also active functions; and indeed it was these that constituted the prize. The captain enjoyed extensive powers. Seated opposite his group he was responsible for maintaining silence and attentiveness among his ten scholars, noting down absences, making the scholars recite their lessons, ensuring

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that assignments had been done with care and completed. The consuls exercised the same authority over the captains in their camp that these did over their own group members. Everyone was thus kept constantly in suspense. Never has the idea that the classroom is a small organized society been realized so systematically. It was a city-state where every pupil was a functionary. Moreover, it was thanks to this division of labor between the teacher and the pupils that one teacher was able without too much difficulty to run classes that sometimes numbered as many as two or three hundred pupils.

In addition to such regularly recurring competitions there were intermittent competitions too numerous to list. From time to time the best pieces of work were affixed to the classroom doors; the most noteworthy were read publicly in either the refectory or the Hall of Acts. Aside from the annual prize-giving, which took place solemnly to the sound of trumpets, prizes were given out spasmodically in the course of the year for a good piece of declamation, for a meritorious literary work, for a well executed dance, etc. From the second form onwards there was in each grade an Academy to which only the best pupils belonged. Then there were all kinds of public meetings in which the most brilliant pupils appeared and to which the families came to hear and applaud them. Thus an infinite wealth of devices maintained the self-esteem of the pupils in a constant state of extreme excitement.

Here again the Jesuits were effecting a revolution compared with what had gone before. We have seen that in the University and the colleges of the Middle Ages the system of competition was completely unknown; there were no rewards to recompense merit and induce effort, and exams were organized in such a way that for conscientious pupils they were little more than a formality. And here we have, quite suddenly, a totally different system, which not only establishes itself but which instantaneously develops to the point of superabundance. It is easier to understand now how the training given by the Jesuits managed to acquire the intensive character which we were recently remarking upon. Their entire system of discipline was organized towards this goal. The state of constant competition in which the pupils lived incited them to strain all the resources of their intelligence and will-power and indeed rendered this essential. At the same time the careful supervision to which they were subjected diminished the possibility of lapses. They felt themselves guided, sustained, encouraged. Thus everything induced them to exert themselves. As a result, within the colleges there was genuinely intense activity, no doubt flawed by being expended on the superficial rather than on the profound, but whose existence was incontestable.

However, now that we have noted the transformations that the Jesuits initiated in the realm of school discipline, we must seek their causes. Where did these two new principles come from? Did they derive exclusively from the particular aim the Jesuits were pursuing, from the very nature of their institution, from the mission they had assigned themselves, or were they not, by contrast, rather the effect of more general causes, were they not a response to some change that had occurred in public thought and ethics?

What must immediately rule out the first hypothesis is the fact that if the Jesuits were the first to realize these principles in academic practice, they had nevertheless been recognized and proclaimed already by the educational thinkers of the Renaissance. We remember Montaigne's protests against teachers unintelligent enough to wish to regiment the minds of all individuals in identical fashion. He too wants teachers to study the temperament of the pupil, to test him in order to understand him better, to make him, as he says, "run in front of himself" in order to be able to guide him in an enlightened way. And from another point of view, we have seen that the love of glory, the thirst for praise, and the sentiment of honor were for Rabelais and for Erasmus, as for the major thinkers of the sixteenth century, the essential motives for all intellectual activity and consequently for all academic activity. The Jesuits were thus on these two points, at least in principle, in agreement with their time. It is interesting to note that we know of at least one college where, before the time of the Jesuits, the competitive system was organized and practiced, moreover, in a form that in more than one respect resembled the one we have just described. This is the college at Guyenne, where Montaigne spent

several years. The pupils in any one class were divided according to ability into sections that bore considerable resemblance to the Jesuits' groups of ten. Examinations took place frequently in which the pupils of one class were questioned by the pupils from a higher class or section. And here again we encounter competitions in public speaking, which took place before the assembly of all the classes.

It was the fact that a great change had taken place in the moral constitution of society that made this double change in the system of academic discipline necessary. In the seventeenth century the individual played a much greater part in social life than that which had hitherto been accorded to him. If, in the Middle Ages, teaching was impersonal, if it could be addressed diffusely to the indistinct crowd of pupils without any disadvantage, this was because at that time the notion of individual personality was still relatively undeveloped. The movements that occurred in the Middle Ages were mass movements carrying along large groups of human beings in the same direction, in the midst of which individuals became lost. It was Europe in its entirety that rose up at the time of the Crusades; it was the whole of cultivated European society that soon afterwards, under the influence of a veritable collective urge, flooded towards Paris to receive instruction. The didactic style of the time was thus in accord with the moral condition of society.

With the Renaissance, by contrast, the individual began to acquire self-consciousness; he was no longer, at least in enlightened circles, merely an undifferentiated fraction of the whole; in a sense, he was himself already a whole, he was a person with his own physiognomy who had and who experienced at least the need to fashion for himself his own way of thinking and feeling. We know that at this period there occurred, as it were, a sudden blossoming of great personalities. Now, it is quite clear that in proportion as people's consciousness becomes individualized, education itself must become individualized. From the moment it is required to exert its influence on distinct and heterogeneous individuals it cannot continue to develop in blanket fashion, homogeneously and uniformly. Thus education had to be diversified, and this was only possible if the educator, instead of remaining distant from the pupil, came close to him to get to know him better and to be able to vary his actions according to his individual nature.

But from another point of view, it is equally clear that an individual possessed of self-awareness, with his own set of beliefs and interests, cannot be motivated or trained to act by the methods applicable to an amorphous crowd. For the latter methods mighty shakings of the foundations are needed, powerful collective impressions of a rather vague and general kind, like those that sent tremors through the multitudes gathered around Abélard on the Montagne Sainte-Geneviève. By contrast, in proportion as each individual has his own particular moral life he must be moved by considerations specifically appropriate to him. Thus one must indeed appeal to self-esteem, to the sense of personal dignity, to what the Germans call *Selbstgefühl*. It is no accident that competition becomes more lively and plays a more substantial role in society as the movement towards individualization becomes more advanced. And so, since the moral organization of the school must reflect that of civil society, since the methods that are applied to the child cannot differ in essence from those that later on will be applied to the man, it is clear that the processes of the medieval disciplinary system could not survive; it is clear that discipline had to become more personal, to take greater account of individual feelings, and consequently to allow for a degree of competitiveness.

There was thus nothing intrinsically arbitrary about the two innovations the Jesuits introduced into the disciplinary system: the principle underlying them, at least, was well-grounded in the nature of things, that is to say in the condition of society in the sixteenth century. But if the principle was right, if it was to be retained, if it deserved to survive, the Jesuits applied it in the spirit of extremism that is one feature of their academic policy and, simply by doing this, they denatured it. It was good to keep close to the child in order to be able to guide him confidently; the Jesuits came so close to him that they inhibited all his freedom of movement. And in this way the method worked against the end it was meant to serve. It was wise to get to know the child well in order to be able to help

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in the development of his nascent personality. The Jesuits, however, studied him in order to stifle more effectively his sense of self—and this was a potential source of schism. At least, once they had recognized the value of rivalry and competitiveness, they made such immoderate use of them that the pupils were virtually at war with one another. How can we fail to consider immoral an academic organization that appealed only to egotistical sentiments? Was there then no means of keeping the pupils active other than by tempting them with such paltry bait?

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